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Dutch wary of bringing Tetra to Europe

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Liesbeth Evers, Network News, Network IT Week 17 Apr 2001

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Frans Schippers, commander in the Dutch Fire Brigade, who has been trialling Tetra technology for three years, confirmed that the weakness was in the 'Direct Mode Operation' (DMO) used in Tetra. He said that while it was vital to firefighting, DMO caused major problems with the system.

In DMO mode, radio throughput decreases with increase of frequency. "If the frequency is higher, power output must also be higher to give the same coverage," Schippers said.

Tetra requires a higher frequency than other professional radios and needs more power to provide the same coverage.

"We are trialling the technology at 170Mhz, but when we move to the Tetra standard later this year, we will use 450Mhz. We must see if we can increase the power to ensure the signal gets through," he said.

Failing signal throughput was the cause of the New York Fire Department's (NYFD) objections to its digital radio system. It is considering reverting back to analogue radios after recalling new \$4.5 million digital radios after a fireman's mayday call got lost in coverage glitch.

Chief Dickson of the NYFD added that digital radios were "unsafe" when two people transmitted at the same time. "With digital radios, the message gets lost, while an analogue radio can hear at least one with interference from the other," he said. "We may have to revert back to analogue radios."

Increased power output could involve a health risk for firefighters.

BT Airwave, responsible for the Tetra project in this country, was unable to comment on the Dutch and US fire services' statements.

Motorola supplies XTS 3500R handsets and the NYFD runs its own radio network, not network operator Nextel, as was previously reported.

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